

PART II
THE POLISH JEWS PAST

CHAPTER I
HISTORICAL SKETCH

BEFORE considering the future prospects of the Polish Jew it is necessary to draw aside the veil which obscures his past, and glance at the influences which have tended to form his character since the first of his race took refuge amongst the Sclavonic people.

The Middle Ages, the treatment of the past, the character, restrictions, persecutions, proscriptions and privileges, the ghettos, communes and the *kahals* created the Jewish question which has assumed such gigantic proportions in the Russian Empire at the present day, and of which the influence has extended as far as England and America. It is difficult to say when the Jew entered Poland ; for though it is certain that he was there before Christianity, his first advent is wrapped in the rumours and mysteries of tradition and legend. It seems equally certain that he went there for the purpose of carrying on that traffic for which the Sclavs were famous, taking his slaves as far from Poland as the Pyrenees. There is one legend touching the Jew which, if it serves no other purpose, indicates that he was

received by the Poles with good humour and enjoyed their confidence and esteem.

According to this *bajka* (legend) the Kingdom of Poland, whilst yet pagan, was suddenly bereft of her King, Popiel by name, who had been gathered to his fathers by undergoing the uncomfortable process of being eaten up by mice as a punishment for his manifold iniquities. There was some difficulty about choosing his successor. The election meetings had been long and stormy, everybody was in a hurry to get home, and the suggestion of an old man that they should settle the question by electing the first person who entered the town at daybreak was received with enthusiasm. Primitive as it was, it at least saved the indolent Poles from any trouble in the way of post-electoral petitions and the tiresome consequences of such political amenities as sumptuous dinners and crowded "at homes."

As chance decreed, the first man to enter the town after daybreak was a Jewish merchant, Abraham, who dealt in gunpowder and was known to his customers by the endearing and diminutive form—Abramek. He was hailed with joy and taken in triumph through the town to receive the crown which had so lately rested upon King Popiel's wicked head. But Abramek, either because he was overpowered by the great and unexpected honour or because he felt chary about wearing a diadem left by a man whose body had nourished mice, refused. The electors were importunate: they remonstrated, pleaded and threatened, and at last it was arranged that

Abramek should retreat for a short time into an empty hut to reflect upon the duties and responsibilities which had been so suddenly thrust upon him. The impatient electors waited, waited, and waited. Two days and two nights passed, but Abramek still remained in meditation. At last one of them, named Piast, said that as Abramek did not emerge from the hut himself, he meant to go and fetch him. Like most suggestions which nobody had thought of before, it was received with enthusiasm and wonder that the meeting had overlooked such a simple solution. In a few minutes Piast had broken in the door of Abramek's hut. "Poles!" cried the Jew, emerging at last. "Your countryman, Piast, has done a clever thing. Take him for your leader! He has understanding, for he has perceived that the country may not remain so long without a king. He is courageous, because he broke open the door of my hut when the meeting had decided that I should remain in meditation; offer him the crown, and I hope you will be grateful to God and to Abramek for the suggestion." And so it was that the first of a long and illustrious line of kings was chosen by a Jew for the Polish people.

The immigration of Jews into Poland, hitherto intermittent, appears to have become permanent during the eighth century. Not only did they flock thither from Germany, Hungary and Bohemia, but they left their settlements in the Crimea and in the land of Rus, to seek refuge in Poland.

The Arabian historian, Eba Hankal, who flourished

in the tenth century, says that there was at that time a prosperous Hebrew state famous for its agricultural superiority upon the banks of the Volga, ruled over by a Jewish monarch. The name of it was Bath, and its territory was protected by 1,200 warriors. What became of that community we know not, but it is supposed that after its fall or decay the inhabitants went to the land of Rus, and thence, as we shall see, to Poland and Lithuania, where their descendants, ignorant of their traditions, live at the present day.

But this was not the only important Jewish settlement in Eastern Europe. Some of the children of Israel who were enslaved by the Babylonians and Assyrians drifted in the course of time to the land of the Armenians and thence to those countries, such as the Crimea and Caucasus, which now belong to the Russian Empire. In the year 1840 a diligent search in the Crimean Peninsula was rewarded by the discovery of the remains of Hebrew civilisation. One of the monuments there found, dated in the four thousand and twenty-seventh year of the Jewish era, and therefore corresponding to the nine hundred and sixty-seventh year after the birth of Christ, was erected to the memory of Isaac Sangari, a famous figure in Jewish history. It was he who tamed and united the wild tribes among whom he had settled, introducing Hebrew civilisation. We find traces of these Crimean Jews as far as Kieff, where they attempted to convert Vladimir the Great to Judaism. The story runs that these Crimean Jews, hearing that the Prince had

decided to abandon the pagan religion of his forefathers and adopt a creed which would bring himself and his subjects under the influence of civilisation, sent delegates to Kieff with the message, "We hear that Bulgarians and Christians have come to teach you their creeds. The Christians believe in one whom we have crucified. We only believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." When Vladimir asked them what their convictions were, they replied, "To be circumcised, to refrain from eating the flesh of pigs and of hares, and to keep holy the Sabbath Day." The Prince asked where their land was. "Jerusalem," they answered. "But do you live there now?" Vladimir enquired. To this the Jews answered, "God was angered with our forefathers, and scattered us all over the world for our sins, and our land was given to Christians." "How can you," asked Vladimir, when he heard this, "cast aside by God and scattered as you are, teach others? If God had loved you and your law, you would not be wanderers upon earth. Do you want the same misfortune to fall upon us?"

So Vladimir the Great refused to embrace Judaism. Nevertheless they translated the books of Moses into Russian (the original is, or was, in the Vatican), and must have had a certain amount of influence in the Principality of Kieff to venture to try to convert its Prince. But this influence gradually weakened, and the position of those Jews who had settled there became so unbearable that they were obliged to leave Vladimir's domains and take refuge in Poland. The Jews attributed this change

in the attitude of the Russians to Greek intrigue, but the Russian historians affirm that the Jewish usurers alone were to blame, as they charged such high interest for their loans that their debtors grew exasperated. In the year 1112 the soldiers in the Principality mutinied, and concluded their orgies by sacking the Jewish quarters in Kieff, which were also destroyed by fire a few years later. One prince of the line of Monomach, anxious to obtain possession of the crown, gained his object by suggesting that the people should expel the Jews from the land, and set the example by driving them from his own estates.

They were not any more fortunate in the Southern portion of the land of Rus, for, though the inhabitants of the country tolerated them, they suffered terribly from Tartar raids.

In Vilno, on the other hand, they flourished so well that they occupied a large portion of the town. But they had less influence in the neighbouring Principality of Moscovy, whither they appear to have paid frequent visits for trading purposes, and even collected taxes which were rented to them by the prince. In Lithuania they suffered persecution, and fled thence to Poland. They were afterwards taken back to Lithuania as slaves, or drifted thither whilst trading, and prospered more than their co-religionists who had remained in Poland, where the Jews from Germany had already obtained leave from King Leszek to settle. This king's reputation for toleration attracted thousands of Jews, who obtained their

first Charter of Privileges in Poland in the year 905 A.D. This document was unfortunately lost during the wars with Germany in the next century; but copies of that granted by King Boleslas in the year 1264 are still extant, and prove that the Jews were treated in Poland with toleration at a time when they were persecuted not only in Germany but in England as well. The most interesting clauses in this Charter are the following:—

- (1) In cases against a Jew a Christian alone cannot bear witness: Jews must also do so.
- (3) A Jew may take any article as a pledge except those used in Church or soaked in blood.
- (6) When a pledge has been stolen and the Jew swears he did not know of it, then the Christian must pay him the capital lent upon the pledge and the interest thereof.
- (7) When a Christian pledge is lost, by fire or by theft, whilst in a Jew's keeping, the Jew may free himself from the responsibility thereof by an oath.
- (8) The Jews in quarrels amongst themselves are excluded from the Polish tribunals; they shall remain under the protection of the King, or a *Wojewoda*, (Governor of a district).
- (9) He who wounds a Jew shall pay a fine and the costs of his cure.
- (10) He who murders a Jew shall pay a fine and suffer confiscation of his property.
- (11) He who strikes a Jew shall pay a fine.
- (12) Jews shall not pay higher taxes than the townspeople.

- (14) A Christian who spoils a Jewish cemetery shall suffer the confiscation of his estate and pay a fine besides.
- (18) He who throws stones at a Jewish school shall give the *Wojewoda* two pounds of pepper.
- (20) When there is no proof as to who has murdered a Jew, we will give legal protection against the suspected man.
- (24) No man shall be quartered upon a Jew.
- (26) The abduction of a Jewish child shall be considered as a theft.
- (27) When a pledge has been in a Jew's possession for a year and a day, it becomes his property.
- (28) Jews cannot be forced to give back pledges upon their feast days.
- (29) Those who take them away by force shall pay a fine.
- (30) The Jews may not be accused of using Christian blood.
- (35) In night attacks the neighbours must lend the Jews aid under pain of a fine.
- (36) Jews may buy all kinds of goods and touch bread and other eatables.

The Jews were able to freely profit by this Charter for the next century. At the end of that time the Poles conceived a dislike to foreigners. This was owing to the bad government and consequent unpopularity of King Ludwig of Hungary, who reigned in Poland from 1370–1382. They suffered from the delinquencies of the Hungarians who flocked to the country. The

Charter was modified, and during the reigns of Ludwig's successors, Kings of the House of Jagiellon, the children of Israel were ordered to wear red patches upon their clothes and yellow caps to distinguish them from the rest of the population. Their condition became still more deplorable after the Council of Basle (1431–1443), whose influence reached Poland and led to the persecution of the Jews, who had learned to look upon this country as a haven of security from the massacres and ill-treatment they had experienced in other parts of Europe.

The reader will doubtless recollect that the Jewish question obtained a large share of the Council's attention, and that their object was to employ measures which would force them to embrace Christianity. Hard laws, all tending to exclude them from intercourse with the Christians, were passed, and Polish delegates took copies of them home. Then John de Capostrano, the Inquestor of the Jews, visited Cracow, and his anti-Semitism, combined with the zeal of the Polish clergy for their Church, incited the townspeople to such an extent that they fell upon the Jews, sacking their shops and houses, burning and massacring them and their families in a manner worthy of a Spanish *auto-de-fé*.

These terrible scenes, which generally terminated with the expulsion of the survivors, were repeated in Lemberg and other towns, for the passions of the people had been fanned by the adherents of Capostrano to such a pitch that the wildest charges against his victims re-

sulted in massacre, rapine and arson. The King, Kazimierz Jagiellonczyk, was powerless to help his *protégés*, and they could only wait until the passion of the masses had been satisfied, when they again crept back to their former haunts, set up their booths and bartered, ran errands, and lent money as of old. This wave of anti-Semitism, however, had one lasting effect, for even after the popular passion, tired of bloodshed, had sunk down to the usual state of passive anti-Semitism, legislation stepped in and placed restrictions upon their mode of living. They were no longer allowed to build their dwellings side by side with the Christians. Not only were they ordered to live in isolated quarters of the towns, separated by a wall or ditch, but Christians who owned property near their dwellings were obliged to sell it without delay, lest they should become contaminated by living near the Hebrews. This wave of exotic anti-Semitism, which was evinced in a manner totally at variance with the principles and sentiments of the Polish people, strove to separate the Jews further than ever from the rest of the community. They were forbidden to bring their quarrels before a Polish magistrate, and from this time they began to consider the Talmud as their authority in the quarrels and misunderstandings which sprang up between themselves, and to look up the Rabbis as their judges. In Posen the Law of Moses was referred to in judging Jews charged with misdemeanor, and the order to use it for this purpose was given by King Sygmunt Augustus. At the same

time the Jews in Lithuania were ordered to bring their quarrels before their own court and to obey the verdict of this body.

With the fall of the House of Jagiellon and the rise of the elective monarchy, their state grew worse instead of better. Henry of Valois, the Frenchman who sat upon the Polish throne, brought the petty persecutions they suffered to a crisis. His successor, Stephan Batory (1576–86), a Pole, treated them with more justice. It was he who first gave their *Kahals* the right to govern the internal affairs of their Communes. But still these vicissitudes did not separate them from the rest of the population as much as it might have done. Indeed, their separation only became general when the nobility, or *Szlachta*, granted them charters and the right to settle in groups upon their land.

It is difficult to-day, when Poland's neck has been under a foreign yoke for a century, to realise the enormous amount of power the Polish nobles then exercised over the peasants and Jews. The last not only settled in the royal cities, *i. e.* those which fell under the jurisdiction of the King, but in course of time they lived in the "noble towns," *i. e.* those which were built upon the lands of nobles, and in the noble villages, both of which fell under the governance of the lord of the manor. These lords were the undisputed masters of the Jews and peasants who lived upon their soil. So great were their privileges, and so powerfully did they support one another, that the kings themselves did not often venture

to contradict them. As to the Jews, they were at their mercy ; their lawsuits against Christian debtors and Christian oppressors were decided by their lords, whose power was very often abused in favour of a fellow-countryman and a co-religionist. Nevertheless it is well not to forget the balance allowed by the Polish character. Like all Slavs, they were careless, easy-going, idle and unstable of purpose. Unless a Jew were seriously in their way they were content then, as they are now, to live and let live. Besides, the landed proprietor, like the King and the *Wojewoda*, could not get on very long without his Isaak or his Jankel, and the bargain therefore worked both ways. If the squire or magnate wanted ready money, and, Pole as he was, he always needed it, the Jew would lend it to him ; if his wife wanted pearls or silks or furs, there was nobody but the Jew to procure them, for a Polish merchant, even if he undertook the task, would need as many months as the Jew days to accomplish it. If there were an important despatch to be speedily delivered at the other end of the kingdom, the Pole intrusted it to a Jew, because he knew that the bearer would not get intoxicated whilst on the road and impart the secret of his mission to others. If his house or palace were in bad repair, if he needed gold wherewith to buy the partisans who would support him at the Diet, if he wanted a suit of armour, a horse or a sword, a soldier or a coach, there was ever the ready, obliging Jew to supply his wants and wait patiently for remuneration. It mattered little for the Pole that he

paid a ridiculous price for all he bought, that he was taking the bread out of his brothers' mouths, and sinking deeper and deeper into debt. He was only too happy to have financial aid always at hand, and thereby developed the Jew's money-lending propensities. The Jew was not to blame. All other occupations were proscribed. Not being able to possess land, he could not cultivate the soil; not being allowed to carry arms, he could not become a knight. Even the pursuit of crafts was forbidden him when the townspeople found out how apt he was. His one monopoly was usury, and his only occupation commerce. Little wonder that he clung to both and excelled in these two means of earning a living.

By the middle of the sixteenth century we find, from a pamphlet entitled "*Ad querelam mercatorum Cracovierorum : responsum Judaeorum de mercatura,*" that Poland possessed only 500 Polish as against 3,200 Jewish merchants, and, in spite of the efforts of the Polish craftsmen to retain their crafts in their own hands, that there were three times as many Jewish craftsmen. A historian of the same period remarks that "A Pole avoided commerce because 'merchant' and 'Jew' meant almost the same thing, unless indeed, here and there, a German settled and carried on his trade." The Jews had one friend, the monarch. Nearly all the Polish kings were favourably disposed towards a class which was so financially useful. The Polish townspeople were ill-matched against the superior business capacities of their

rivals, who had nothing to fear from the nobles, forbidden as they were by law to engage in trade or commerce. Living in a country lacking in natural defences, open to attacks from the West, and greedily watched by Tartars and the Cossack hordes from the East, the Polish *szlachta* had to be prepared to sally forth at a moment's notice and fight not only for his country, but for the very roof which sheltered himself and his family. The burgher, hardly pressed by the magnates, only dreamed of becoming noble, and strove to attain this end on the ever-ready battlefield. Commerce, therefore, was left to the Jews, and the Charters which gave them permission to trade saved them for a long time from any real competition. They made full use of their opportunities. The signs of their gold were everywhere, and no monarch used this financial element better than Kazimierz the Great, who lived as far back as the sixth century. Commercial communication was so difficult in the sparsely-populated country that he formed a project of building towns along the most frequented tracts. He needed money for this undertaking, and the Polish burghers were unable to lend it him. He therefore appealed to the Jews, who advanced him a loan to cover the cost of building seventy towns. In return for this they obtained the permission to settle freely in these towns, which became the most flourishing in the whole kingdom.

Long after the death of Kazimierz European anti-Semitism penetrated into Poland and forced the Jews

to live as a separate caste. But by that time they had obtained a footing in towns and settlements from which it was impossible to dislodge them. In the days of Kazimierz many Polish towns could show the then unique sight of Jewish houses built against the walls of monasteries, and in Piotrkof the town hall and royal palace were both surrounded by Jewish dwellings. Though the magistrates and townspeople were little inclined to treat the Jews with justice, the kings continued to extend them their protection until the Diet became powerful enough to pass laws against them. Indeed, the monarchs often did their best to extend the trade of the Polish Jew to foreign countries. Their efforts in this direction were not always successful. One king, Sigmunt Augustus, tried to use his influence with Ivan Bazylevitch to enable the Jews under his rule to extend commercial enterprises to Russia. But Ivan refused to allow the Jews to enter his domain, replying with a candour which is lacking in modern diplomatic correspondence. He says: "We cannot allow the Jews to enter Russia. That people hath brought us poison for both our souls and our bodies, hath sold us powder which bringeth death, and hath blasphemed against the very Christ. For this reason I will not hear of it." In Inflandia the Jewish merchants from Poland met with the same rebuff. But they were more fortunate in the countries which lay to the south of the kingdom, and carried on lucrative trade with the Armenians, in spite of the Tartars of Perekop,

who swooped down upon their booths from time to time and "made havoc" amongst them and their merchandise.

In Poland itself a spell of national peace always brought their rivals, the Polish burghers, against them. These townspeople's attacks were chiefly directed against the small Jewish traders and shopkeepers: those who carried on extensive export and import trade did not arouse their jealousy, for such undertakings were beyond their business capacities and powers of endurance. But they could not bear to see such outward signs of the Hebrew's prosperity as the stores of cloth and other merchandise in the towns, and especially in large cities as Cracow, Lublin and Lemberg. They sent petitions to the kings to annul or modify the charters, and, when the Diet grew more powerful and their own influence there increased, passed laws against the hated traders. In Lemberg in the sixteenth century the Jews, who had flourished exceedingly in the town, were forbidden to sell any merchandise whatever in their private houses, and were only permitted to barter certain goods in the market-place on fair-days. But, by virtue of their contract with the towns, this decree was powerless without the pale of the local magistracy, and the Jews removed their stalls and booths to the suburbs, where the land belonged to the nobles. Disputes arose between the townspeople and the local magnates, who were determined to retain their new and profitable tenants as long as possible. At last

a compromise was arrived at by which the Jews were allowed to remain where they were for another two years in order that they might sell off their stock of merchandise. But, knowing the weak side of the Polish nature, the ever-present need of ready money, they paid a tax and obtained an extension of this term. This prolonged lease gave them, in accordance with Polish law, certain rights of possession which no amount of opposition from the townspeople, headed by the magistrate, could annul. Then the burghers founded guilds, and excluded the Jews therefrom ; but the latter do not appear to have suffered very much in consequence. The Polish craftsman was indolent and always liable to be called upon to change his tools for a sword and fight one of the many enemies that surrounded Poland. In fact, a law passed with a view to restricting Hebrew enterprise was generally followed by fresh Hebrew prosperity, such as the development of an extensive trade with the port of Dantzig, the establishment of large markets in Podolia and the Ukraine, and the immunity, by Royal Charter, from duty upon all goods brought into the country. It is also characteristic of the Polish Jews' history that whenever they were forced to separate from the rest of the inhabitants, their towns, or quarters of towns, grew in size and importance, whilst the place they had left declined into poor and insignificant suburbs. To quote a historian of this period (Moraczewski), this was but a natural result, for it i

not the religion, but the industry of the inhabitants which makes a town, and this last only remained with the Jews. When they first settled in Poland they were forced to live by usury, and grew rich thereby, for they were permitted to charge an interest of 25 per cent. Afterwards they were allowed to sell a few kinds of merchandise, such as coarse linen and second-hand goods; but in the course of time, when wars occupied the Poles, they sold everything, even in the "Royal Cities."

The Jews of the Ukraine and Lithuania were in a better position, both socially and financially, than their brethren in other parts of the Polish Republic. Here there were few usurers. Land produce and cattle were sent thence to other parts of the country, and even to Germany. This trade was entirely in the hands of the Hebrew, who often possessed land in Lithuania, and, when his fortune permitted him to desist from business, studied astrology and the Talmud.

True, they, in common with the Polish population, suffered much from the Cossack raids, and especially from the Cossack rebellion in the earlier half of the seventeenth century. Those wild hordes that overran the country, pillaging and burning as they went, had mercy for none, and often scorned to respect the Sanctuary of the Holy Altar. Still less did they spare the Hebrew, whose wealth aroused their cupidity and whose creed excited their own strange religious fanaticism. It was their

custom upon approaching a town or city to demand that the Jews be surrendered to them for massacre. This request was invariably refused, but the refusal generally cost large sums of money, to which the Jews themselves contributed the chief share. Lemberg paid as much as 20,000 Polish złoty¹—an enormous sum for that time—to save the Jews from total extermination at the hands of the Cossacks. No sooner had these savages been driven back beyond the Ukraine, whence they had penetrated as far as Cracow—than the Swedish war swept over the country. The Jews were taxed in order that they might contribute towards the expense of these conflicts.

But at the same time these national misfortunes aided the Hebrews in another way. After and during the wars with the Cossacks, Swedes and Moscovites, they obtained a footing in all the towns, even in Cracow, and the magistrates ignored the infringement of their laws for the simple reason that nobody else had any leisure for trade. But this was not all. Not only did the Poles who had hitherto engaged in commerce leave their shops and booths for the battle-field, but the kings, desirous that the Jews should play a more important and profitable part in the impoverished community, held out inducements to them to become Christians. Those who did so were ennobled, made much of and received as equals by the landed proprietors

¹ About £500 in English money.

and magnates. For reasons which will be explained in the next chapter, few Jews took advantage of this opportunity of changing their faith, and it was not until the latter part of the eighteenth century, when Poland's power had almost passed away and Russia's legions were menacing her frontiers, that some of the sect of Contratalmudists asked, or rather consented, to be received in the fold of the Roman Catholic Church. Before this time conversions were the exception rather than the rule.

The civil position of the Jews remained about the same until the year 1791, when the Constitution of the 3rd of May, a day still commemorated in Poland as a national holiday, gave them equal civil and national rights and removed all the disabilities which had hitherto pressed upon them. The principles upon which these reforms were founded were briefly as follows:—The Jews, who had hitherto only enjoyed the toleration of the Government, were henceforth to be considered as responsible members of the community; the country had therefore the right to demand that they should have full advantage of a secular education. All distinctions of dress, of places of abode, and of legislation were to be removed, together with all differences but that of religion, which was free to all. All branches of industry were open to them. Their Communes were to have a voice in the government of the country. They were to be allowed to occupy government posts and live

in any district of the towns or parts of the country they wished. They might and must share the military service with the rest of the community ; they were to be admitted into all posts, ranks and positions upon perfect equality with Christians. Rewards and punishments, honours and dishonour were to be the same for all. In twenty years' time they were to be allowed to buy landed property. No Jew was to be baptised before the age of 29, or Jewess before that of 18 years, and after one whole year of Christian instruction.

Perhaps, had Poland been allowed to carry out these reforms, the history of her Jews would be differently written, and the antipathy of race to race, which expresses itself in Separatism, in Zionism, in anti-Semitism and revolution, would have been averted. Perhaps by this beginning of the twentieth century we would have seen a new Poland, in which the Hebrew and Sclav combined hand in hand to develop the resources of a republic whose brilliant past gives rise to regret that the present is so sordid. Perhaps, indeed, the dream of the assimilator would have been realised and a new race, uniting the best qualities of Sclav and Hebrew, arisen to lead the fortune of Eastern Europe. But it was not to be. Poland fell, and with it the Polish Constitution, which she has not yet won back from her Russian masters, in spite of reiterated promises. When the civil code of Napoleon was adopted for the Kingdom of Poland in 1812, special laws against the Jews were

nominally abolished. But Russian anti-Semitism placed them under restrictions¹ which still fetter them, and which have helped to fan antipathy into hostility and engender a problem without affording the means of solving it.

¹ The chief of these restrictions are—a Jew may not serve in the army or navy as an officer, may not enter the civil service in any capacity, may not act as trustee under a Christian's will; can only enter the government schools and universities in a certain proportion, and must have the word "Jew" written upon his passport. Unless he is registered as a merchant he cannot re-enter the country after a prolonged absence.

CHAPTER II

THE PAST OF THE POLISH JEW — HIS SURROUNDINGS, ORGANISATIONS, CHARACTER, AND CULTURE

IN comparing the lot of the Jews in mediæval Poland with that of their co-religionists in Germany, France, Italy, Spain and England we see that they were treated with a toleration unknown elsewhere at the time. We see that even when subjected to petty persecutions, they were not systematically ill-treated, that their teeth were not extracted nor their limbs amputated; that they were not tormented by the fanatic to change their faith nor tortured by the rapacious to render their gold. They were free to practise the rites of their religion, to barter, to travel, to come and go across the frontier in pursuit of business. They were free to administer the laws for the governance and levy taxes for the maintenance of their own communities. When the flame of exotic anti-Semitism, fanned and fed by foreign missionaries and ministers, swept through the Polish masses, the persecutions it engendered never lasted longer than a few hours, and only once did they attain proportions which placed them on a level with similar scenes enacted in the rest of Europe and repeated in other parts of Russia to-day. For a century after the Charter of

Boleslas granted them liberty and assured them protection, they had every opportunity of mixing freely with the Polish population of the towns, and even when this charter was modified they were never altogether cut off from intercourse with the Poles. How is it, then, that the number of neophytes was so small until the middle of the eighteenth century ? Why was it that the inducements made to them to change their faith and become members of the Polish community were met with so coldly ? Why was it that, seeing the advantages accruing from such a change, so few of them decided to make it ; that the daily intercourse which took place between them and the Poles did not draw them a whit nearer to a people whose anti-Semitism was so different from that of other nations, whose tolerance was proverbial amongst the Jews of Europe, and whose national character renders assimilation so easy for the foreigner who settles amongst them ? Why is it that, whereas the German colonists, who settled long after the Jews, have lost all trace of their origin but their names, becoming Polish patriots and Roman Catholics ; whereas the Stuarts and O'Rourkes who sought refuge in the Republic from a hostile government, a hated monarch or religious persecution, have become as ingrained in the Polish community as if their names had ended in *ski*, the Jew is still a stranger ? From the time Abramek chose Piast as King, they have only succeeded in drifting further and further from the rest of the community until their individualism has developed into

separatism, their gratitude cooled to indifference, their indifference warmed into antipathy, and their antipathy strengthened into hostility. Who is to blame for this relationship of the two races, for this waste of vital force in the country? Is it the Jew or the Catholic, the Selav or the Hebrew? These questions must be answered at length, for the blame lies with the Poles on the one hand and the Jews on the other, with the political instincts of the first and the character of the second. Let us glance at the Polish community and consider the different classes of which it was composed.

During the tenth and eleventh centuries, that is, when the Jews first went to Poland in large numbers, the King exercised absolute power. All his subjects, from the officials who filled his train, the knights whom he clothed, armed, and fed, and the clergy who were dependent upon his bounty, down to the slaves or prisoners of war, bowed to his will and did his bidding. But the two succeeding centuries saw a change: petty princes, each with his own scheme of home and foreign politics, with his own army, court and knights, defied the kingly authority. Decade after decade marked alterations in the community: the burghers, descendants of German colonists, once prosperous, dwindled into insignificance; the princes fell to the state of knights; the monarchy became elective, and the only class which increased in influence and numbers was that comprising the descendants of the fighting men, the nobility, or

Szlachta, who virtually began to govern Poland from the fourteenth century. Their first charter dates from 1373, and was granted by Ludwig of Hungary on condition that the crown should pass to his daughter Jadwiga. They not only elected the kings, but could themselves become candidates for the kingly office. Their power over the peasantry was well-nigh unlimited. Though they levied taxes they paid none, and the King when in need of money applied to them for voluntary contributions. If they were not forthcoming, and such was frequently the case, he had recourse to the Jews. Criminal cases which sprang up between them were tried, not before the royal judges, but by their own tribunals. In 1538 the King wanted money from the *Szlachta* to carry on the war against Muscovy: it was given, but only in return for the rights of the higher tribunals. Henceforth there was no appeal to the monarch from the decision of the *Szlachta*: a plebeian who killed a noble forfeited his life, a noble paid a fine for killing a plebeian. The nobles, and the nobles alone, had the right to possess land; not only the agricultural produce, therefore, but the riches of the earth and treasure-trove belonged to them. They reserved to themselves the privilege of filling the higher ecclesiastical offices; only a member of the *Szlachta* could become a bishop or a canon; only his person was immune, only his speech free. They had their own *sejmiki*, or local Diets, where they passed laws, levied taxes upon the rest of the population, and controlled the

movements and actions of the monarch, who could not make war or peace, marry or divorce, or even go abroad without their permission. By the beginning of the sixteenth century they had passed a law decreeing that the King should change nothing in the legislature without their consent (*nihil novi*), and by the latter half of the same era they had abolished the spiritual jurisdiction which the clergy had hitherto exercised over them. Free from all duties but that of military service, this sole responsibility increased their power, which the King was always striving to weaken. This perpetual struggle led to domestic factions and fierce quarrels not only between the monarch and the *Szlachta*, but between rival magnates, anxious to obtain the greatest amount of influence at the Diet in order to pass a profitable measure or elect a relative to the throne. As the only privileged class they jealously guarded their rights. All the *Szlachta* were equal; titles gave none the ascendancy, but those who disgraced the caste by engaging in trade or working at a craft lost their patent of nobility and were degraded for ever.

It is not to be wondered at that a class which exercised power without performing duties, which enjoyed the best the country had to give, which divided the burden of taxation between the burghers, the peasantry and the Jews, which had every opportunity of developing the indolent, careless, ostentatious and spendthrift side of the Sclavonic temperament, and which drew its income from the products of agriculture,

should find the Jews' gold acceptable. But this was all. No thought of the economical and political waste engendered by the peculiar position of the Hebrew appears to have crossed the nobles' minds. To them the Jews were not people but things—things to be protected against the hostility of the townspeople because, like the proverbial hen that lays the golden eggs, they were very useful. No thought of the morrow troubled them, for it is not in the Polish nature to do more than enjoy the day which is. Just as they cramped the other classes of the community by using them as conveniences created for their own present well-being, so did they use the Jews to do the work they detested and lend the gold they needed to equip them against the German or to restore the faded splendour of their palaces. So from them the Jew could not expect to receive inducements to change his faith or take his place amongst those who sat in high places. In them he found many means of building up or adding to a fortune, and protection from the burghers and the magistrates; but that was all.

He profited still less from the Polish *chłop*,¹ or peasant, whose case was perhaps worse than his own, for the *chłop* was in bondage to the noble whose land he cultivated, and was bought or sold at his pleasure. He was hemmed in by many restrictions. If he had an only son, the latter could not leave the land he was

¹ The Polish *chłop*, or peasant, was deprived of liberty in 1496. From 1543 his master had the right to sell him with or without land.

born on ; if many, only one was allowed to go to the neighbouring town to learn a craft or be apprenticed to a trade. When a peasant's son left the land of his own accord, his father's inheritance, if he had any, passed to the master. His daughter could marry a free man upon one condition, that he settled on the land as if he belonged to it. If the *chlop* cultivated his master's land, he was obliged to pay a tax from out of the proceeds, to perform certain services, to pay his master in money and in kind, and to render a tenth part of his produce to the Church. He was obliged to buy his salt, herrings and drink in his master's pot-house,¹ and to sell his fowls, eggs, butter, cheese and flax to the manor and to the manor alone. His master also controlled his earnings, had the first refusal of work—at his own price. More than this. The lord of the manor did not allow his peasant to rent land on a neighbouring manor if his own fields were not under cultivation, to keep more than a fixed number of heads of cattle or to bleach more than a certain quantity of linen. The *chlop* could not sue a noble before a tribunal, and could only give evidence for his own master, who was always the last instance, from whom there was no appeal, and who could brand him, cut off his nose or sentence him to death. Yet even the *chlop* found use for the Jew, who gave him credit, sold him what few comforts of life were in his reach, disposed of his surplus corn and hay, his sheep and oxen.

¹ Almost invariably rented to a Jew.

But in the towns the Jews found at once their bitterest opponents and their ablest rivals, for though the burghers hated the Jewish merchants, they were, for reasons which will now be explained, almost powerless to resist them.

The townspeople, or *mieszczanie*, were rigorously excluded from the privileges of the *Szlachta*. They could not obtain employment in the Civil Service, attain to posts of dignity in the Church, or—with few exceptions—own land.¹ They only participated in public affairs upon the authority of and in accordance with the charters of their respective towns. Vilno and Cracow, indeed, enjoyed the right of sending representatives to the Diet in the sixteenth century, but they were so completely outnumbered by the *Szlachta* that they ceased to profit by this clause of their charter before the close of the same century. They took part in the elections of the King, but here again they were outnumbered.²

But if they laboured under great civil disabilities, the economic difficulties which confronted them were not less considerable. They were beset by the *Szlachta* on every side. The *Szlachta* had the right of importing foreign goods free of duty, a privilege they shared with the Jews, who managed the nobles' import as well as their own.

¹ Burghers of the Russian towns and Cracow had the right to acquire landed property.

² The towns of Dantzig, Torun and Elblag sent representatives to the provincial Senate, and had the right to coin money.

More than that: the *Wojewoda* had the right to tax home produce, and there is every reason to believe that he exercised it. These were not the townspeoples' only grievances. The law which decreed that trade and industry were shameful pursuits, and that fighting was the one honourable occupation, deprived the town of all possibility of profiting by the capital and work of the enlightened classes. The only towns which could possibly develop were those which, like Cracow, Lemberg and Dantzig, were situated on the highways joining the East with the West, and therefore enjoying exceptional geographical advantages. And in these towns, as we have seen, the Jews obtained a firm foothold. The very charters which allowed certain towns to build storehouses for merchandise cramped the commercial development of the country, for by the charters the foreign and local merchants were forbidden to travel by any other roads than those marked in them, and could not pass over the towns which contained their storehouses. They were obliged to store their merchandise in one of the chartered towns, and sell it on market days, and market days alone. This system of special privileges aided the growth of such towns as Cracow,¹ Lemberg, Kalisz and Posen, but meant ruin to others which were less favourably situated. Thus it was that Poland, a country which was rich in agricultural produce, formed a natural link between the East and West, which possessed a Dantzig and a Lemberg, could not develop her towns

¹ These towns were near the frontier.

because the growth of commerce, instead of being encouraged, was stunted by a hundred laws and regulations.

But the townspeople were not only cramped in respect to their pursuits ; they enjoyed little freedom even in such trivial matters as in their choice of dress. The Diet of the seventeenth century forbade the *mieszczanie* to wear silk clothing and rich furs or to adorn themselves with jewellery. The private towns, that is those which were built on ecclesiastical or manor lands, enjoyed no special prerogatives unless they happened to possess charters drawn up according to German law. Their inhabitants, though personally free, were under the authority of the nobles.

These restrictions were rapidly followed by two consequences : the antipathy of the burghers to the Jews, and the anxiety to leave the despised class to which they belonged. The first consequence was inseparable from the second, because the privileges the Jews enjoyed and the business capacity they displayed made it the more difficult for the Polish burghers to amass a sufficient fortune to make them influential. In their antipathy to their rivals they were almost systematic. They made their magistrates complain to the King to draw up contracts, or *pakta*, with the Jews in the hope of arresting their prosperity. But, as we have seen, these measures were of little effect. True, some towns were altogether closed to the Jews, whom the burghers would not admit under any conditions, but these either became to all

intents and purposes German colonies or deteriorated into poverty-stricken settlements. In 1570 the Jews were banished from Warsaw; though their trade with that city was not seriously injured, because they were allowed to visit the city whilst the Diet was sitting—that is—when the palaces were occupied by the magnates and trade was in a most flourishing condition. Another potent factor in their commercial prosperity was, as we have seen, the geographical position of Poland, which caused her to be surrounded by perpetual enemies and forced her inhabitants to be warriors out of sheer self-defence.

When to these conditions and restrictions we add that trait in the national character which is best described by the word “unbusinesslike” and set them against the energy and untiring patience of the Hebrew, with his protection from the powers that were, one can scarcely wonder at the impotent hatred of the burghers or their disinclination to draw nearer to the people whose abilities and charters made them such formidable rivals.

Such is the case for the Jews, such are the conditions, prerogatives, antipathies and prejudices which caused the Polish community to treat them as strangers and mere conveniences, sometimes even as enemies.

We have seen that the monarch and magnates only protected them because they needed their gold, and that, though the protection was far more liberal than the children of Israel enjoyed elsewhere, there was no thought

of anything but toleration prompted by egotism. We have seen that the burghers did their best to drive them out of the towns, and that, though nobody thought of exterminating the Jews, everybody indulged in tormenting them. But it is only just to hear the other side of the question, and, by looking into the organisations, character and culture of the Jewish people, to see whether they were quite free from the accusations of separatism which the Poles brought against them, and which, ripened by the force of years, has attained such enormous proportions to-day.

It has been remarked that the history of the Polish Jews is contained in the annals of their *Kahals*. To a certain extent, inasmuch as every-day details make up the sum of history, this statement is true ; but the scribes who recorded them passed over the big events which have marked their sojourn with characteristic indifference, and were content to enter in the records of the lawsuits, complaints, elections and punishments which occupied the attention of the *Kahals*.

To-day the revolutionary spirit which prevails amongst the Hebrew masses has done much to undermine the influence of the Jewish Communes. But in the Middle Ages their authority was unchallenged and their influence universal. Established in order that the Jews might enjoy the privileges of self-government in their internal affairs, they were responsible for their actions to none but the *Wojewoda*, who received a fixed salary in return for his protection, and with whom the Jews were on

terms of friendship, which were cemented by the most lasting bond, that of mutual interest. On the one hand the Polish *Wojewodas* received gifts of wine and of money, a portion or even the whole of the sums paid into the Jewish court for fines, enjoyed the convenience of an army of Jews ready to run errands for themselves and their magnificent households, and of willing bankers to fill their ever-empty purses. The Jewish Communes, on the other hand, received the protection of the greatest magnates in the land, had control of their own affairs, free from the interference of the Christians, were assured that their schools, cemeteries and hospitals would be secure from the attacks of the hostile burghers and their *Kahals* supplied with a military guard to watch over their own prisoners, who were generally kept in the cellars under the synagogues until their term of punishment had expired.

The governing body of the Commune was the *Kahal*,¹ composed of from four to forty members according to the size and importance of the community. For instance, large Communes, such as those in Posen, Cracow, Lemberg and Vilno elected a *Kahal* of as many as forty members, smaller towns confined their number to thirty-four, whilst the Communes in the small settlements and villages were under the authority of six or eight men who were themselves responsible to the *Kahals* of the nearest large town. It is difficult to determine the

¹ The same term is still applied to the executive committees of the Jewish Communes. See Chapter on Communes.

exact nature and amount of authority these *Kahals* exercised, partly because the records of them are very meagre and partly because they were not all organised upon the same lines. But generally speaking the following rules applied to them all.

The *Kahal*, whether it consisted of forty persons or four, was divided into several groups, each group having its special functions to perform in connection with the administration, legislature, education and charity of the Commune. These groups were called commissions. The charitable commission attended to the maintenance of the Jewish hospitals, the care of the destitute and the burial of the poor. Another commission insured property against losses incurred by fire, attended to the cleanliness and order of the streets in the Jewish quarters, to the condition of water wells, to the accuracy of weights and measures, and to the preparation of food destined for consumption by the Jews. Another commission passed regulations as to dress and music, drew up marriage settlements, and settled conjugal disputes. The *Kahal* had control of the communal treasury, and levied taxes upon those members of the Commune who were able to pay for the maintenance of the poor, of hospitals, schools and cemeteries. But the most important part of their authority was the tribunal, which not only superintended the drafting and execution of written agreements, bills, contracts, marriage certificates, etc., but exercised all the functions of a criminal court, which was presided over

by a Rabbi and consisted of several judges (*dagamin*) in the large Communes.

In criminal cases, Rabbis, learned in the laws of Moses, judged according to them and put the verdict to the vote when opinion was divided as to the guilt of the accused or the measure of punishment to be meted out to him. The presiding judge, who was exempt from the payment of government taxes, always came from another Commune lest his judgment should be prejudiced. As he and his colleagues dispensed the sacred law which the Jews hold in such profound respect, the *Kahals* rapidly became despotic. They could banish an offender or a common enemy from the towns or Communes, deprive him of his liberty by keeping him imprisoned in the cellar of the synagogue guarded by the *Wojewoda's* soldiers, and impose fines at their pleasure. Little wonder that when, as will be seen, the greater part of the Jewish community, under the influence of the Rabbis, clung to its ancestral faith, traditions and prejudices, those who strove to free themselves from the shackles of superstition were forced to escape from the persecution of their co-religionists and take refuge in other countries; little wonder, too, that few found the courage to change their faith or trespass on any of the multitude of regulations which encompassed their lives in order to develop their intellectual endowments in any other direction than that laid down by the traditions of their race. They were powerless against the decision of the *Kahals*, for there was no appeal but

a special charter granted by the Polish King, which could not be executed without the concurrence of the Jewish judges.

When fairs and markets drew large numbers of Jews together for commercial purposes a special court went on circuit to the towns and tried cases of dispute then and there. The members of the *Kahal* were elected at the Feast of Passover, for the space of one year. The elective system varied considerably, but it is safe to assume that the whole of the community did not participate in the elections, which were performed by chosen delegates who were generally elected not by votes, but by casting lots. Not every Jew could aspire to the honour of becoming a member of the *Kahal*. Only those who were versed in the Law and the Talmud, who paid taxes, who owned house property or at least a large shop, and who had been long enough in the Commune to inspire the respect of their fellows, might aspire to that honour. When the elections were over the authority of the newly appointed *Kahal* was formally confirmed by the *Wojewoda* and entered upon its numerous duties. If one of the members was guilty of tardiness or carelessness in the execution of his duties or of irregularity in keeping the communal accounts, he was promptly fined and dismissed.

These two organisations, the Commune and the *Kahal*, did much to form the character of the Polish Jew. It preserved that respect and awe with which the Jewish masses regarded the office of Rabbi, and tended to

confirm them in their adherence to Hebrew culture and their antipathy to what the Polish Jews call "worldly" things. For it must not be supposed that the Polish Jew of the Middle Ages was merely a merchant and a usurer, that his life ended in the market-place, or his ambitions soared no higher than the driving of a good bargain and the extortion of the highest possible amount of interest. When the market was silent and the evening shades had fallen upon the Jewish quarter, the Hebrew's real life began. In his own house, excluded from the gaze of the curious, surrounded by the family whose ties he revered and loved with all the strength of his affectionate nature, he either listened as some Rabbi expounded the Scriptures or expounded them himself, telling of the great hope which was to come out of Israel and of the Messiah who was to lead them back to the Promised Land. All the worry of the world, the teasings and the petty persecutions, the struggle for existence and the care of the morrow were forgotten. But this almost fanatical love for his religious life, this blind obedience to the Rabbis and *Kahals* caused the Polish Jew to adopt a culture which removed him further and further from the Polish community.

It was the boast of the sons of Israel that, whilst many of the Poles were illiterate, all their children were taught to read and write, thanks to the abundance of their schools and the teaching afforded by the doctors of their synagogues.

In Poland the study and cult of the Talmud were far

above the standard preserved by the Jews of other nations, and was already famous as early as the twelfth century. From the middle of the sixteenth century, Cracow boasted a Hebrew printing press imported from Italy. The rich paid for the books which proceeded from it; the studious poor received them as gifts. The Jews of the town of Lublin possessed a school which drew Jewish scholars from Europe and even from Palestine ; other towns, profiting by royal charters, established higher schools and set up printing presses. Askenazy (Eleazer ben Eliahar), Rabbi in the Commune of Posen, who died in 1586, spoke ten languages and spent his spare time in developing Judaism in Poland. Polish Jews were called upon to fill dignities amongst their co-religionists in other parts of Europe. Another Askenazy, Hillel ben Hire, was elected Rabbi of the Jewish Commune in Hamburg. Kaidanover, a Jew of Vilno, filled a similar post at Frankfort-on-Maine. The father of Hebrew bibliography, Szabtai-ben-Josef Bass was born in Kalisz. In the Ukraine the Jews were renowned for their skill in the art of healing, and more than one Jewish doctor had become court physician. But those who devoted themselves to secular study were few and far between. It was the cult of the Talmud which chiefly occupied them.

In the early part of the sixteenth century the ecclesiastical authorities protested against Jewish children attending schools in which Christians were taught, but the Jewish Synod urged their co-religionists to study secular

works in spite of this restriction, since they had their own schools supported by the proceeds of special taxes levied by the *Kahals*. Their manifesto points out that :—“The study of the Holy Scriptures cometh first, but other lore should not be neglected ; learn therefore, be of use to the King and to the magnates, and they will respect you. As the stars in heaven, as the sands of the sea, so is the number of the Jews in the world ; but here they do not shine as stars, they are trodden upon by all, as upon sand. Why, then, can you not rise out of the trampled moss, even as the cedars of Lebanon ?”

But the Talmudist culture of the Rabbis continued to hold the field at the expense of secular learning. True, we hear of some Polish Jews, disguised and under assumed names, at Pisa, where they had gone to study subjects the Rabbis forbade, but such cases were exceptional. The list of learned Jews who were born or lived in Poland during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries contains 80 names, only seven of which belonged to men whose writings are of sufficient general interest to justify their translation into any European language. The Polish Jews appear to have fully appreciated the toleration with which they were treated ; they were, as their writings testify, proud to call themselves “Polish.” But the corrupted German jargon was never abandoned for the language of the country in their daily intercourse with each other, and their wise men wrote not in Polish, but in Hebrew, Latin or German.

This assiduous study of the Talmud and the Holy Scriptures led to frequent discussions and split the Polish Jews into many sects, which either obtained a very weak foothold or have been altogether unknown amongst their co-religionists in other countries.

It would be a long task to enter into the details of all these sects or of the cabalistic practices many of them resorted to, for, though causing much ado amongst the Hebrews themselves, their history would be of little interest to the general reader. But three are worthy of brief notice: the one because it gained numerous adherents amongst the Jews of Russia and Poland, the other because its activity has not tired to the present day, and the third because it led to the formation of a society whose members finally became baptized and joined the Roman Catholic Church. The members of the first sect are known as Karaïms; the second as Chassideens, and the third as Sabbatajans.

The Karaïms were those who brought Hebrew civilisation to the Crimean Peninsula and sent their delegates to Vladimir the Great of Kieff, when it was rumoured that the Razan Prince intended to change his faith. Mordchaj-ben-Nisan, a learned Polish Jew, wrote the history of his sect at the instigation of Jacob Trigland, Professor and Rector of Leyden University in 1698.

The Karaïms (from Heb. *Gara*, to read) reject the teaching of the Talmud and accept only that which is contained in the books of the Old Testament. They are sometimes called the Protestants of Judaism, and

attach more importance to the moral and practical side of their religion, rejecting the letter in favour of the spirit of the Law. Their bitterest enemies are the Rabbis, whose authority they have long since rejected. In the seventeenth century they enjoyed the special protection of Jan III. of Poland, who allowed them to live in all the towns in the republic without any restrictions whatever. Some authorities affirm that this privilege was accorded as a mark of respect for one of the Karaims, a certain Abraham Ben Samuel, renowned for his learning; others attribute it to a hope on the King's part, that many of the liberal-minded sectarians would embrace Christianity. There are no records that this hope, if it existed, was realised.

The Chassideens (from Heb. *Chassidim*, pious) were revived in Poland at about the middle of the eighteenth century, by Israel Baal Schem, whose birth is said to have been predicted by the prophet Elias, and whose mother was a hundred years old at the time. He was an adept at cabalistic practices, and fought with demons and evil spirits at an early age. His doctrines were preserved in manuscript until the nineteenth century, when they were published in book form: they are a strange mixture of moral precepts, ridiculous tales of apparitions and mystic interpretations. The original Chassideens were enthusiasts who renounced all the pleasures of this world, spending their time in prayer, reflection and self-imposed corporal punishment in order to expiate their sins and hasten the advent of the Messiah. They

studied cabalistic books and emaciated the body by fasts and vigils in order to release their souls from the flesh and absorb themselves in God. But the Chassideens whom Israel Baal Schem drew around him were much less severe in the mode of their living. He taught that the union with God can only be effected by contemplation, that mortification of the flesh is deleterious to this desirable attitude of mind, which can only be attained by enjoying all lawful pleasures of the senses and thereby rendering them their natural vigour. The sects gained many adherents, and spread to the Jews in Galicia, Walachia, Moldavia and Hungary. As they were respected more for their piety than their intellectual superiority, they attacked secular learning as unnecessary and even injurious. To-day, as then, they are bitterly opposed to the perusal of worldly books, even when written in Yiddish. They also object to the teaching of Polish in the communal schools. They raid Jewish houses and search for secular literature, promptly confiscating any which they find. These expeditions generally take place on Friday evenings, when the merchants and traders have leisure for reading. I remember one poor Jew complaining to me that his daughter, a pretty girl of fourteen or fifteen and the proud owner of two thick plaits of hair, was surprised whilst reading a "worldly" book by some Chassideens of the neighbourhood, who promptly quenched her thirst for secular knowledge by emptying a pot of pitch over her head. When they know of the existence of a

library or collection of secular books in the settlement, they set spies to find out its whereabouts, thus making it impossible for their broader-minded co-religionists to profit by the little store of literature, for the simple reason that they do not dare to fetch the books lest they should betray the secret of their hiding-place.

Notices forbidding the Jews to read worldly literature are posted up in the "Betharmidrasz," or houses where the young Jews abandon themselves entirely to the study of the Talmud, often leaving their wives in order to do so. The Russian Government sometimes steps in, raids the Betharmidrasz, arrests those found upon the premises, and imposes a fine upon the president.

It will be observed that if the Polish community were indifferent to the economic and civil possibilities of the Jewish strangers amongst them, the strangers themselves, owing to their character, organisations and culture, tended to hold aloof from the rest of the population. Which side is the more to blame the reader must decide for himself; but the above facts are those which, worked into the private and national life of the Poles and Jews, produced a problem and an antagonism which increased as time went on. It was impossible but that the Polish Jews, immersed in cabalistic lore and buried in the study of the Talmud, should have flocked to the side of the notorious pseudo-Messiah and impostor, Sabbataj—Cevi of Smyrna. Many of them afterwards paid allegiance to a leader who, once an

adherent of Sabbataj, abused the confidence of many in order to obtain his own selfish ends, and after living as a Jew and a Turk, finally embraced the Christian faith. But the story of his adventures, impostures and ambitions must be reserved for the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

FRANK AND HIS FOLLOWERS

THE ravages of Cossack hordes about the middle of the seventeenth century drove many Jews from Poland to the domains of the Turkish Sultan, where, wearied and almost hopeless, they listened eagerly to the doctrines of a pseudo-Messiah, Sabbataj Cevi, who was to put an end to their sufferings and lead them back to the Promised Land flowing with milk and honey. The homage this man received from the Jews in Smyrna aroused the jealousy of the reigning Sultan, Mahomed IV., who forced him to embrace the faith of Islam. But his Hebrew followers still continued to believe in him, and when he died (1676) others adopted his doctrines, which denied those of Judaism, with the exception of the rite of circumcision, and rejected all of the Old Testament but the "Song of Songs." He professed to believe in the cabalistic book of "Zoar," in a Trinity consisting of a Highest Cause, a Messiah and a *Matronita*, and in the transmigration of souls, by which all the heroes of Israel were but various forms of the same personality.

These doctrines were discussed wherever Jews lived,

and nowhere so eagerly as in Poland, where the Rabbis did all in their power to prevent the influence of this new sect from spreading amongst their flocks. But its success was considerable there, nevertheless, as the Jews had been suffering from poverty, heavy taxation and oppression which had reduced them to a state of misery that inclined them to dream of a Messiah to release them. Amongst these was one Frank, a Jew of humble origin, whom the vicissitudes of life had driven at an early age to Smyrna, and whose ambitious mind saw possibilities in the new sect which would, if properly used, afford him the means of gratifying those luxurious tastes which are inherent in the Hebrew. After spending some years in Turkey and assisting in the orgies in which those who still professed the faith of Sabbataj Cevi indulged, Frank returned to the land of his birth, where he speedily converted several Jews to the tenets of Christianity. This fact and his own mode of life drew the censure of the Rabbis upon him; and rumours of strange practices, in which nude men and women danced round him, singing extracts from the "Song of Songs," caused the Jews of the Podolian settlement in which he lived to break into his house one night and arrest him and his companions upon a charge of spreading principles and practices contrary to the teachings of the Talmud. Then it was that Frank, seeing the Jews were thoroughly aroused against him, openly expressed his intention of joining the Roman Catholic Church, and applied to the neighbouring landowners to protect him

from the persecutions of his own people, and to arrange a solemn meeting between himself and the Rabbis to discuss the Talmud and the falsity of its doctrines.

The Polish Bishops appear to have been favourably inclined to this proposal, and, as if to clinch the bargain, some twenty-five of Frank's adherents were publicly received into the fold of the Church of Rome. These neophytes published a manifesto dictated by the Consistory of Podolia, in which they declared that the Talmud was a blasphemous book, and that the one true creed was that which professed belief in the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

A meeting of the nature of that which the Polish Bishops finally arranged between Frank and the Rabbis, and in which judgment was given in favour of the contra-Talmudists, as Frank and his followers were called, was contrary to the laws of Poland. According to them no civil or religious dispute between Jew and Jew could be judged by a Pole. Such differences as the creed of the Hebrew entailed were to be settled before the Jewish *Kahal*, and the *Kahal* alone had the right to pronounce judgment in the dispute between Frank and the Rabbis who flocked from far and wide, from Poland, Lithuania and Russia, to defend the Talmud and protest against Frank's teaching and mode of life. But it appears that the Bishop of Podolia was too dazzled by the prospect of converting the now famous Frank, and too pleased at having already been, as he supposed, the means of converting five-and-twenty of his adherents, to trouble

himself about legal formalities. After the meeting had lasted eight days, judgment was given in favour of Frank, and the Talmud publicly burned.

But Dembovski, Bishop of Podolia, died shortly after this extraordinary meeting, in which Bishops and Rabbis sat side by side to discuss a point of Jewish law, and Frank's position rapidly changed. As he and his adherents—except twenty-five neophytes—had not publicly and ceremoniously embraced Christianity, the Church did not extend her protection to them. They were jealously excluded from the Jewish Commune as contra-Talmudists. The generality of the population looked askance at a man who was neither a Pole nor a Jew—who wore a green turban, who lived like a Turk and kept a harem, who was supposed to have embraced Islamism, who, though having no visible means of subsistence lived in luxury, and was in short a mystery to Jew and Pole alike. Before long the Orthodox Jews, or Talmudists, persecuted him to such an extent that he was obliged to leave the country and take refuge in Stamboul, where he was joined by a small party of Jews from Poland. Here he remained until the new King of Poland, Augustus III., who was much under the influence of those courtiers with whom Jewish assimilation had become a fashionable fad, issued an order by which the contra-Talmudists received the protection of the general laws (1788). A few months later Frank returned to Poland, where he began to play the rôle of apostle. His followers contributed to his treasury, his

house became more luxurious than ever, whilst his adherents were half-starved and in rags. But he saw visions and performed miracles, he cured the sick, he prophesied, he expounded the mysteries of the book of Zoar; he wrote wise sayings and preached them. Hundreds of poor Jews rushed to him, giving up their meagre earnings that he might pass his days in his harem and his nights in mysterious orgies. It is difficult to say what attracted these poor wretches to this man, whether it was that love of show which is so strong in the Hebrew, or the hope of bettering their position by following a man who was, or had been, on friendly terms with Polish magnates and bishops, or whether it was the personality of Frank, who, with his melodious voice and glowing rhetoric, kindled the hope of future happiness in the breasts of men and women who knew of nothing but misery on earth. Whatever may have been the reasons which impelled his followers to defy the hostility of the Orthodox Jews, it is certain that he taught them, crudely enough, it is true, some of the tenets of Christianity. Whence he derived them, without a knowledge of Polish, it is difficult to say, but the following words, which are his, prove that he was not altogether devoid of poetic fancy.

“ He who would be attached to the living God must have faith with all good works towards people and God, and do good to every one, as far as in him lies the responsibility. Although temptation come upon him, he must be firm of spirit, turning neither to the right

nor to the left. If he do this, the good God will strengthen and enlighten his heart, and he will attain to the rank of a true man."

"I will show you God, for in me are power and strength, and me hath God chosen."

"The time will come when you will count my steps, seek my footprints, yea, and kiss the soles of my feet."

"If you will listen to and obey my commands, you will come to great gain, which neither your grandfathers nor your great-grandfathers attained to."

Frank does not seem to have told his followers what this "great gain" was to be ; but his pomp, his promises, and his precepts soon increased their numbers to such an extent that a strange phenomenon appeared in the Polish Republic—that is, a large community, ruled by an adventurer who preached doctrines opposed to the political and religious creeds of his adopted country, and calculated to found a sect tending to be hostile to the Republic. His infant daughter Eve was already spoken of in this community as something superhuman. His general mode of life provoked the hostility of the Jewish Rabbis to such an extent that they managed to subject his followers to many petty persecutions, in spite of the royal decree issued for their protection. Finally, in 1759, Frank was obliged to seriously consider whether it would not be better to embrace Christianity, and he wrote to the Bishop of Lvov (Lemberg) and to the King asking to be baptised. The Bishop did not receive his

request with enthusiasm, neither did the Papal Nuncio, who considered that Frank's proposal was an excuse, and that he only wanted the King's protection in order that his followers might ply profitable trades and supply him with the means of living in luxurious ease, and of ruling over his community. On receiving permission to be baptized, Frank again asked the Polish Bishops to assist at a conference with the Talmudists. Many Poles thought this was to gain time and obtain equal civil rights without embracing Christianity. But the conference took place in the Cathedral of Lemberg; the Jewish Communes of Russia and Poland sent delegates, and the aristocracy of Poland flocked to hear Rabbis argue in a Roman Catholic Cathedral. The conference lasted from the 8th of July till the 10th of September. Frank appeared late in the day, driving into Lemberg with all the pomp of an Oriental potentate; though the plague brought by his miserable adherents raged in the town for weeks afterwards. He was warned by the ecclesiastical dignitaries not to drive about in his gorgeous coach, as such pomp was unbecoming in one who lived upon alms. His followers, blinded by his splendour, gave him their last mite, and would have starved but for the charity of the Poles. The priests did their best to persuade Frank to be baptized, promising that if he and some of his chosen adherents would consent to a simple ceremony, they would be permitted to proceed to Warsaw, to be there received into the Roman Catholic Church with all due pomp. At last

he consented, and was baptized in the Cathedral of Lemberg. Thirteen men, six women, and ten children followed his example. Frank received the name of Joseph. Shortly afterwards he was again baptized in the Chapel Royal in Warsaw with all the ceremony of Roman Ritual. Between 1759 and 1760, 540 of his adherents followed his example. This was the first occasion on which so many Jews in Poland have embraced Christianity, and it is doubtful if this number has ever been exceeded within a space of twelve months. The question now arose what was to be done with these neophytes.

As such, they would no longer come under the control of laws and privileges relating to Jews, and would suffer persecution from Orthodox Jews. They were not men of culture or education. Even their leader could not speak or write the Polish language. As they were of humble origin and great poverty, it was clearly the duty of the Republic to make some provisions for them. The Papal Nuncio at Warsaw, Serra, has left much valuable information on this subject.

A certain number of Polish magnates offered to receive the neophytes on their country estates. But Frank had other aspirations, and demanded a grant of separate territory near the Turkish frontier, where he could freely exercise his influence upon his adherents and form a separate state, independent of the Polish Republic. The Nuncio, who was strongly opposed to granting this demand, pointed out that Frank, once in possession of

such a colony, would tend to destroy the country's peace, and that keeping the Frankists upon charity would rapidly turn them into a band of vagabonds. The question was eagerly discussed at court. A large party agreed with Serra that the neophytes should be given a settlement in the centre of Poland, to avoid all possibility of intrigue with foreign powers. Frank was assured that the neophytes and their children would be well cared for by the benevolent; but he rejected this proposal on the grounds that his adherents would, if distributed about the country, fall into the state of serfdom. At last it was proposed that those neophytes who had been born in Poland (the Papal Nuncio described them as *Neofiti Polacchi*) should be allowed to settle in the cathedral cities, which the Polish Jews had not been allowed to enter, and in the so-called royal cities in order that they might be able to earn a living by engaging in trade and crafts. As to those from Moldavia and Hungary, who had flocked to Frank's standard in considerable numbers, their leader asked that they might be allotted a separate settlement. Some of the Polish magnates attempted to persuade the King to grant them crown lands in Lithuania which brought in but small revenues. In return for them the neophytes were to pay taxes and support judges and priests; to take upon themselves, in fact, all the civil responsibilities of a Christian community.

Frank promised the King that if he would grant his adherents a settlement, tens of thousands of Jews would

embrace Christianity and settle in Poland, become good patriots, and do much to restore the tottering Republic to its former position amongst the countries of Eastern Europe.

But meanwhile the Papal Nuncio, who, with the exception of a Lemberg priest named Mikulski, seems to have been the only person to take any active steps to verify the sincerity of Frank's intentions, had been making enquiries both amongst the Frankists and in Turkey. His labours were not unrewarded. The priest learnt from a few ignorant Frankists in Lemberg that they believed Frank was Christ, and that the end of the world was approaching. He drew up a written statement to this effect dictated by six Frankists—two of whom were incapable of signing their names in any language—and sent copies of it to Warsaw. Their statement is not astonishing when we remember that, as most of the Frankists did not know Polish and could not receive instruction from the priests, their only knowledge of the principles of Christianity was derived from Frank himself, and Frank was too fond of power and homage to lose any opportunity of gaining the adoration and respect of his adherents. The Nuncio obtained information of his antecedents from the Bishop of Nicopol. He also learned from a Frankist that the whole sect subscribed to keep the "master" and "fifty favourites," that he and the favourites met on certain days in the week to sing chants in the Jewish jargon and observe certain rites and ceremonies which cannot be mentioned here, and which

appeared to the Nuncio, to quote one of his Despatches, *un culto religioso ed esterno*. Serra did not hesitate to communicate all he had learned to the King, who simultaneously received news from Lemberg to the effect that the newly baptized Frankists were practising polygamy and other Turkish customs. Frank, who was in the habit of driving about Warsaw in a sledge driven by three horses harnessed tandem-fashion, to the admiration of the crowds which collect so easily in the Polish capital, suddenly fell from a hero to an impostor, and he was seized and imprisoned, first behind the grill in the Church of the Bernardines, afterwards in the monastery at Bielany in the neighbourhood of Warsaw. After a short time he was brought before the Consistory of Warsaw, charged with practising secret ceremonies and believing in the transmigration of souls and other doctrines contrary to those of the Roman Church. He denied that the Frankists practised polygamy, and, whilst admitting that he had embraced Islamism, said he had done so in order to escape the persecution of the Jews. When asked how he knew whether his adherents were prepared for baptism, he replied that when he saw a light over the head of a Jew or Jewess who wished to be baptized he allowed them to do so, and that when there was no light he forbade them to embrace Christianity. After the examination he was sent to the fortress of Czenstochova awaiting the decision from Rome, so that he could not exercise his influence upon his adherents, who, after being put through

their cathechism by means of an interpreter, were dismissed.

Frank remained a prisoner in the fortress of Czenstochova for thirteen years. This fortress, which was at once a stronghold and a monastery of the Polish Brotherhood, has played a most picturesque part in Polish history. In the year 1685 the fortress, meagrely garrisoned and led by the Abbot Kordecki, had heroically sustained a siege against the Swedes ; to this day its magnificent church, which contains the miraculous picture of the Holy Virgin brought from Constantinople, is the Mecca of pious Poles.

When Frank was sent thither the garrison consisted of 80 decrepit soldiers and a few officers. Their commandant was the Abbot, to whom, by an observance which had pertained from the days of the heroic Kordecki, the keys were rendered every evening. The veterans were not averse to receiving bribes, and although Frank was sent under their care in order that his adherents might not be influenced by him, it was not long before he managed to receive some of his followers, whose visits frequently lasted several days. His influence soon began to exert itself over them. They settled in the neighbourhood of the monastery in large numbers, and before he had been there two years his wife shared his prison with him. Delegates sent by the Frankists at Lemberg and Warsaw held councils with him. Ceremonies of the nature of those held in the Podolian settlement became of frequent occurrence. A company of fourteen

"Brethren" and as many "Sisters" used to take walks on the ramparts of the fortress and listen to Frank's harangues. Indeed, if it were not for the evidence of this man's private chronicle, it would be difficult to believe that such scenes were enacted in a fortress where he was a prisoner. He taught his adherents the principles of a communism completely at variance with the laws of the Republic. He practised ceremonies which had absolutely nothing in common with the Christian religion or the ordinary ethics of European morality. With his approbation, nay, at his instigation, polyandry and polygamy were practised to an extent which broke the family ties of his "company."

From this "chronicle" we gather that Frank was a man of a passionate and cynical nature, who satisfied the lowest instincts under the cloak of exalted ideals and aims. His bad example was eagerly imitated by his disciples, whom such a mode of life, free from all restraints which commonly bind society together, pleased, and who became more and more dependent upon their leader's caprices.

In spite of these orgies, the "company's" outward life was in accordance with the regulations of the monastery. As Christians the Frankists fulfilled them all. They attended the church, went to confession, and partook of the Church's most solemn Sacrament. But they did this, not from conviction, but for the mere form, for fear that the priests would suspect them of their sectarian practices. It was here that Frank first began to teach

those of his adherents who visited him, the cult of "Our Lady," that is, of his daughter AWACZA. By the time he was released from the fortress they had grown so accustomed to this cult that she was regarded by them as superhuman.

After five years' "imprisonment" Frank wearied of Czenstochova, and though he assured the good abbot that all Jews should be baptized, he began to seriously consider how he might extend his influence to the Russian Jews and convert them to the Greek Church. The Poles were too occupied with the presence of a Russian army on their borders to think about the converted Jew in Czenstochova, and when he sent delegates to a Russian bishop who chanced to be in Warsaw on business, only the Jews knew of his plans. They immediately apprised their co-religionists in Moscow that Frank was trying to get released from his Polish prison by Russian command, in return for a promise to convert the Polish and Russian Jews to the Greek Church, and to use Poland's weak situation for his own ends. Their prompt action frustrated him; his delegates, who promised that twenty thousand Jews would enter the Greek Church as soon as their master was free, were sent out of Moscow, and Frank remained in Czenstochova until the year 1773, when the fortress capitulated to the Russians, and he, regaining his liberty, proceeded to Warsaw.

There he appears to have dreamed of new influence and power, for in a letter addressed to a certain

acquaintance in Podolia he urges him to "force all Jews to the front." But the Russians, who were now masters of that part of the Polish territory, first imprisoned the delegates and then sent them across the frontier. In Warsaw Frank was not more fortunate. His old adherents had done well in trade and commerce, and were unwilling to embark upon new enterprises. They seemed in fact anxious to be rid of their "master," who had just received an invitation from the followers of Sabbataj Cevi in Moravia to join them. They promised to send him money, but the well-to-do refused to accompany him. Seeing that his rôle in Poland was finished, he left it for Moravia, never to return, with these words:—

"Because you have blasphemed, I must leave this country, which is God's inheritance. . . . It is the land which was promised to the Patriarchs. Even if all the countries upon earth filled with precious stones were given me, I would not leave Poland, for it is the inheritance of God, and the inheritance of our fore-fathers."

He lived in Moravia in great pomp at the expense of the Frankists in Poland until his death in the year 1791. His daughter Eve lived until 1816.

So much for Frank. It is now time to consider his adherents. What manner of men were they, who at his instigation became nominally at least Christians, and who whilst contributing to the maintenance of their "master" gradually drifted away from him? What

influence did they exert upon the Polish community at the time and afterwards ?

Their fate is the more interesting because they were the first Polish Jews to embrace Christianity in any large number. True, Jews had been converted before, and having enjoyed the especial protection of a Polish magnate had flourished, intermarried with the Polish element, and gradually assimilated to such an extent that only the curious who seek the documentary evidence of dusty archives knew that their forefathers once belonged to the despised race of Israel. But such cases had been few and far between. Frank happened to be born when the once powerful Republic of Poland was beginning to fall ; he lived when men who observed the signs of the times asked themselves with consternation what the morrow would bring forth. At such periods all fanatical movements, all phases of social or political excitement find favour ; for men, seeing that their country's case is hopeless, that grave changes are taking place, are ready to catch at any straw, at any myth, which may stave off the evil day. This is the secret of Frank's success with the Poles. There were those at the court of Augustus III. who believed that the assimilation of the Jews would build up a new Polish race which would defy the triple enemy composed of Germany, Austria and Russia. They did not stop to ask themselves whether Frank's intentions were sincere, whether the Jews who followed him were prepared to accept their new faith, whether the movement would extend

to any appreciable extent. They rushed into the idea as the Pole rushes into all ideas, with enthusiasm but without reflection. There were others who protected the Frankists from purely religious motives, believing that every baptized Jew was a soul rescued from the clutches of hell. On the other hand there was a large party who thought with the Papal Nuncio, Serra, that Frank was nothing but an ambitious impostor, eager to obtain a grant of land near the Turkish or Russian frontiers for himself and his adherents, in order to satisfy his passion for power and intrigue, and to play a profitable rôle in the political drama which was then being enacted in Eastern Europe.

The Frankists who embraced Christianity did so for two reasons. First because their "master," who exerted an extraordinary amount of influence upon his adherents, ordered them to do so, secondly, because, being men and women of the poorest class of Jews, they could lose nothing thereby, and might, by embracing the national faith of the country in which they lived, enjoy privileges which would enable them to engage in profitable trades. As Frank had the protection of the Government, Jewish persecution could not touch them. Besides, they were allowed as neophytes to settle in towns which were closed to the Jews. The advantage of their situation was obvious. Placed in the midst of a Polish population, of a population averse to business and of small business capacity, free from Hebrew competition, they enjoyed opportunities which their brethren might well envy.

Their baptism placed them on a slightly higher social plane than they occupied before. According to their baptismal registers they received surnames derived from the government or town from which they came, with the Polish termination *ski*. Their godparents, who were for the most part magnates and dignitaries, extended protection in the form of pecuniary assistance or the permission to settle in the towns and villages under their rule. But their increasing prosperity soon awoke the jealousy of the Polish burghers, and public opinion grew so strong against the Frankists that after the death of Augustus III. in 1763 the question of limiting their privileges was brought before the Diet of Warsaw. From the reports of their deliberations it appears that many of the neophytes had obtained lucrative posts in public offices. Some had even been ennobled, because, owing to the general laxity with which laws were executed, a Lithuanian law was applied to the neophytes in Poland proper. By this law a Jew or Jewess who embraced the Christian faith was counted a *szlachcic*, and was entitled to all the rights and privileges of the Polish nobles. The murderer of a converted Jew was punished by the same laws which applied to the murder of Christians. So carelessly was the law executed, that a Jew baptized in Lemberg in 1789 figured as a noble in Lublin a couple of months later, though neither Lemberg nor Lublin was within the area of Lithuanian jurisdiction. Owing to the efforts of the Papal Nuncio, who did his best to prevent the neophytes from settling near the frontiers,

many Frankists had gone to Lithuania, where they became noble and gradually acquired landed estates. The Diet of Warsaw which assembled in May 1769 passed a decree ordaining that not only Frankists, but all neophytes should sell their land within the space of two years, under pain of confiscation. This decision was modified in the case of forty-eight distinguished neophytes, who assimilated so perfectly with the local nobility that all trace of their Jewish origin had long been lost.

Not so with those who were not ennobled, or who had not acquired land in Lithuania. With the exception of twenty-three neophytes whom the new King, Stanislaus Augustus, ennobled in order to replenish his purse, the Frankists remained a people apart. Their exclusiveness and their immunity from taxation, their intercourse with and large donations to Frank in Moravia, and most of all perhaps their comparative competence, aroused the indignation of the small Polish tradespeople, an indignation which resulted in the publication of several lampoons and pamphlets which are the more interesting because, after a lapse of over a century, many of the charges therein cited are brought by the anti-Semitic portion of the Polish community against the neophytes of to-day. In them the Frankists are charged with keeping apart from the rest of the population, and from failing to adopt the culture, customs and ideas, of the people whose faith they have adopted. The author of

one, in describing a Frankist christening-party to which he was invited, complains that the table was arranged after the Jewish fashion, that all the guests but himself were of a pronounced Hebrew type, that the Frankists do not apprentice their children to crafts, that they intermarry with other neophytes, and that they are only professed Christians. All who have ever conversed with modern Poles about neophytes must be familiar with these remarks.

To-day it is difficult to say whether their assimilation is complete. If a Polish name, Polish aims and patriotism, the use of the Polish language and the profession of the Roman Catholic faith mean assimilation, then the answer must be in the affirmative. But if by assimilation we mean that the Polish population have forgotten their Jewish origin, that their racial characteristics have been entirely eradicated, that the Poles make no distinction between them and men whose forefathers were Poles and Roman Catholics, then we are bound to admit that the process of assimilation has not yet been completed, and that Poland is still watching the effects of an extraordinary movement, originated by a remarkable man whose ambitions and schemes raised him from the hovel of a Jewish settlement to a princely state in Moravia.

Before leaving him it may interest the reader to read some extracts from his *Book of Words*.

"Jacob said : How terrible is the place wherein God

is. He was mistaken. Where God is, there is nothing terrible, but before God, before the place of His abode, is great terror."

"He who is worthy to approach God Himself will receive in that place which is by God wisdom which is seven, nay, eight times greater than the wisdom of Solomon."

"There is one place in the sea where fish of pure gold hide themselves, but none can catch them, for the danger thereof is too great."

"There are roses which grow upon the islands of the sea. The man who can reach them and gather them will live a thousand years. The gods created great ignorance wherewith to cover these islands, so that none can find them."

"No country fears the Judgment Day as much as Poland, for the foundation of everything is Jacob and Esau."

"How can it be that the true God made this world in which one must die, and where so much is lacking? From this I gather that He who created the world was not the true God indeed."

"God Himself cannot be approached without money."